

ATTENTION TO THE VOICE OF PROVIDENCE,
ESPECIALLY IN SOME LATE EVENTS,
RECOMMENDED AND ENFORCED.

A *L*
SERMON

PREACHED IN THE
PARISH CHURCH OF CODDINGTON,
IN THE COUNTY OF NOTTINGHAM,

ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25TH, 1795.

BY THE REV. EDWARD HENRY HOARE,
CURATE OF CODDINGTON. *re*

IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, AND HE SHALL
DIRECT THY PATHS. *Solomon.*

NEWARK;

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PARISH CHURCH OF GODDINGTON

IN THE CHURCH OF NOTTINGHAM



BY THE REV. EDWARD HENRY HOWARD
CHURCH OF GODDINGTON

AND ALL THAT WAS AROUND HIM, AND HE SHALL
DIRECT THE PEOPLE.

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TO
THE INHABITANTS OF THE
BOROUGH OF NEWARK,
THIS SERMON,
AS A TESTIMONY OF REGARD,
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,
AND HUMBLE SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Author, has two principal inducements for sending the following Discourse into the world; the primary, arising from, what he conceives, the important nature of the Subject; and a secondary one, from his Situation where he resides,

The doctrine of a DIVINE PROVIDENCE, presiding over human Affairs, upholding and regulating the whole System of the Universe, and, in various instances, displaying evident proofs of a Moral Government; appears to him a subject of the highest importance, in which the best interests of Mankind are deeply involved. The late occurrences, with regard to a Dearth of Provisions in this Country, first called his attention to it: and indeed the present state of this Kingdom, and of most of the surrounding Empires of Europe, powerfully excites to meditations of this nature. Surely, *The LORD hath a Controversy with the Nations*; and astonishing events may be expected!

The Author is conscious, that a subject, which opens so extensive and variegated a field for discussion, cannot have full justice done it within the limits of a single Sermon. He has, nevertheless, endeavoured to touch upon most of the principal points: and, as a single Discourse has its Advantages over a more extended and elaborate Treatise, he ventures it forth, such as it is, to meet the Public Eye, with hopes and

and fervent desires, that it may rouse the dormant attention of some, into whose hands it may fall, to things, in which their truest Interests are concerned. The Notes, and several new thoughts, have been added, since it was prepared for the Congregation, to whom it was preached.

As to the Author's Situation here, he has to observe, that, during a residence of near Five Years in this place, he has been precluded from, even once, delivering his sentiments from the Pulpit (though it was solicited for him), through an Illiberality and Suspicion, totally unbecoming the Clerical Character. He, therefore, the more gladly embraces so fair an opportunity (perhaps the last, during his further continuance among them) of laying before the Inhabitants of this Town his sentiments on a subject of such general importance, and of showing to them, that they are not so unworthy a Man, or a Christian, as some of them may have imagined; which, he trusts, the following Discourse will sufficiently evince. If he has manifested a warm regard for some modes of Thinking and Acting, now alas! grown antiquated and unfashionable; it is because he finds them countenanced by his Bible, and has them enforced upon him there, as essential to his eternal Safety and Happiness. If he has kept himself more retired from the gay Scenes and pleasurable Amusements, which he sees the generality around him deeply engaged in; it is because he reads in the volume of Heaven, *Be not conformed to this World; but be ye transformed by the Renewing of your*

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mind—and from a persuasion, that their fatal tendency is, to drown serious Reflection, and divert the attention from spiritual and eternal Concerns; and especially as being, in his view, most incompatible with the Office and Character of a Christian Minister. In short, if he believes, that Man is a fallen, depraved creature, guilty and condemned before God, while in his *carnal* state;* and, that nothing but the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, sprinkled upon his conscience, and the Grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, changing and renewing his heart, can save him from Sin and Hell: it is because he sees these Doctrines so clearly laid down in the Word of God, that he, that runs, may read them; and also, because he finds them expressly recognised in the established Formularies of the Church of England, and their Truth stamp with the broad seal of uniform Testimony from competent Judges, in every period of the Christian Æra. And, if for these things he is slighted and proscribed; he must be content to bear it, as a small measure of *the Reproach of Christ*, in which thousands, far worthier than he, have shared before him. It is a well-known, long-tried maxim, That the World will love its own, and those only.

Desirous, therefore, of leaving among the People of this place a Memorial, at once of his genuine sentiments, and of his Respect for them, and Resistance among them; he has more particularly inscribed

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* "To be carnally minded is Death—because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they, that are in the Flesh, cannot please God." Rom. 8. 6, 7, 8.

ed the following Observations to their Services. And, if, under God, they should be so happy as to awaken in any a serious concern for their Immortal Interests, he will esteem himself richly rewarded for his labour in composing them.

NEWARK, Nov. 20th, 1795.

P. S. The Religion of the Gospel must either be true or false. If false, in the name of Candour and common Honesty, let us renounce it altogether, and no longer make any pretensions to believe it. But, on the other hand, if it be indeed true, it certainly demands something more from us than a cold speculative assent to its Truth, or a mere formal attendance, now and then, upon its Ordinances. It requires a cordial reception from us, and to have a vital and universal Influence over us; and they, who, upon any pretence whatever, do not pay a due practical attention to its Principles and its precepts, to its Provisions of Grace and Mercy and its Duties, cannot possibly be GUILTLESS: *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?*



PSALM 65. 11.

THOU CROWNEST THE YEAR WITH THY
GOODNESS, AND THY PATHS
DROP FATNESS;

INFIDELITY and gross neglect of God
are sins alas! too common in every Age:
The Royal Psalmist complained in his day,
“The Fool hath said in his heart, there is no
“God—the wicked through the Pride of his
“countenance, will not seek after God:
“God is not in all his thoughts.” And may
not a similar complaint be made with equal
propriety in the present day? Do not a
Foolish multitude pay as little regard to the
GREAT SUPREME, as tho’ there were none
such? Do they not, in effect, say in their
heart, as the prophet hath it, “The Lord will
“not do good, neither will He do evil”? *
The hand of God, in the events of Life, is
well nigh as much lost in *second causes*, as
tho’ we believed, that having created the
World, He immediately retired from it into
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* Zephani 1, 12.

the Contemplation of his own eternal and ineffable Essence; and left it to be governed by itself and its inhabitants. But that there is a *superintending Power*, and that *His kingdom ruleth over all*—that He is the great and universal Governor, are truths of the first magnitude, and which should ever be present to our minds. With what propriety are we taught adoringly to exclaim, “O LORD, our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world! the earth is full of thy riches!”

As our attention ought constantly to be directed to the Guidance of providence in general; so especially in the *Seasons of the year*, and the *Productions of the earth*, are we ever to regard the works of the LORD: He giveth us, as the Apostle says, “Rain from heaven and fruitful Seasons, filling our hearts with Food and Gladness.” * This general regard to the conduct of Divine Providence in the Revolution of the Seasons, will receive additional importance from the observation of *peculiar* circumstances, which now and then arise, and seem to claim our more than ordinary notice. Thus, I apprehend, the late Events relative to these Matters, particularly

* Acts 14. 17.

particularly demand our devout attention; and it is with this view, I have now brought the Subject of Providence under consideration.

The psalm, from whence my text is taken, appears peculiarly adapted to occasions of this nature. It is a sublime composition; and was itself, it is supposed, penned on occasion of a great drought in the days of David, which caused a famine for "three Years, year after year." The particulars are recorded in 2 Sam. c. 21. where we are informed, that when inquiry was made of the LORD, concerning the cause of the famine, he answered, "It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites;" that is, because he did this to the breach of a solemn treaty, and that he might give their portion in the land to his own family. Upon this, directions were given to hang up seven of Saul's sons, or immediate descendants; which being executed, we are told v. 14, that "after that, God was intreated for the Land," and sent them a plentiful rain. On which occasion, David composed this divine song; and, viewed in this light, several passages in it appear extremely beautiful.

The five last verses particularly celebrate the Providence of God, in making the earth bring forth abundantly. Our text comprises a summary of the whole subject; *Thou crownest the year with thy Goodness, and thy Paths drop fatness: q. d.* "Thou enrichest and adornest the year with variety of Fruits in the several seasons thereof; and the clouds, which are thy *Paths*,* pour down showers, which make the earth fat and fruitful." Or thus, "This year, which may truly be called *the Year of thy Goodness* (as the margin of our Bibles reads it), thou crownest with copious variety of Fruits and Flowers—thou makest it to shine conspicuous amidst the rest of the Years, like a King adorned with his Crown; and wherever thy gracious Presence is, there is every blessing; thy steps are attended with fruitfulness and plenty." Thus God promised to bless the sixth year of the Jews in the land of Canaan with fruit for *three years*, that while the land *rested*, during the Sabbatical year, there should be no Deficiency for man or beast.† God is here compared to a rich lord, says a certain commentator, whose footsteps are not, like those of tyrants, wet with blood; nor like those

* See Psalm 104. 3. Nah. 1. 4.

† See Lev. 25. 20, 21.

of envenomed beasts, destructive wherever they come: But they *drop fatness*, are ever attended with luxuriant blessings.

My present design naturally leads me to make some general Remarks on the *Divine Superintendence* over the affairs of this world; and then to apply them more particularly to some late occurrences, which call for our notice.

First, then, I remark, that it is of the utmost importance to *acknowledge* and *advert* to the *governing power and Providence of God* in all the affairs and events of life.

The Voice of Reason and Revelation unitedly declares, that as the world was *made*, so it is *governed* by God; and that nothing happens in it, but under his immediate *control, direction, or permission*.

The Scriptures give abundant testimony to this important doctrine. Thus in that solemn address of the Levites and People in the days of Nehemiah, we have the following sublime description of his Being, Works, and Providence; "Thou, even thou art JEHO-
"VAH alone: thou hast made heaven, the
"heaven of heavens with all their host, the
"earth and all things that are therein, the
"sea

“ sea and all that is therein; and thou PRE-
 “ SERVEST them all.”* St. Paul arguing
 with the men of Athens upon their idolatry,
 and directing them to the GREAT SUPREME,
 as the proper object of their worship, de-
 clares, “ He giveth to all life and breath and
 “ all things;” and that “ in Him we live and
 “ move and have our being†” This evi-
 dently, as one properly observes, “ denotes
 God’s necessary, intimate, and most effica-
 cious presence. Words cannot better ex-
 press the *continual* and *necessary* dependence
 of all created Beings in their existence and
 in all their operations on the First and Al-
 mighty Cause; which the truest philosophy,
 as well as divinity, teaches.” The blessed
 Redeemer himself in that memorable passage,
 where he cautions his disciples against the
 love of the world, and an over-weening soli-
 citude for the things of this life, grounds his
 arguments on the truth of this doctrine;
 “ Therefore I say unto you, take no thought
 “ for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye
 “ shall drink; nor yet for your body, what
 “ ye shall put on—behold the fowls of the
 “ air; for they sow not, neither do they reap,
 “ nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly
 Father

* Neh. 9. 6.

† Acts 17. 25, 28.

"Father feedeth them: Are not you of
 "more value than they? And why take ye
 "thought for raiment? Consider the lilies
 "of the field, how they grow; they toil not,
 "neither do they spin: and yet I say unto
 "you, that even Solomon in all his glory
 "was not arrayed like one of these. Where-
 "fore (*a fortiori*) if God so clothe a *short-*
 "*lived* vegetable of the field—shall He not
 "much more clothe you"?* Add to this,
 what he said to his disciples to encourage
 their constancy and perseverance under the
 ill treatment and persecution he fore-warned
 them they would meet with, when he sent
 them forth to preach the gospel; "Behold I
 "send you forth as sheep in the midst of
 "wolves—Fear not them, who kill the body,
 "but are not able to kill the soul: but rather
 "fear Him, who is able to destroy both soul
 "and body in hell. Are not two sparrows
 "sold for a farthing? And one of them shall
 "not fall to the ground without your Father.
 "But the very hairs of your head are all
 "numbered."† Is it possible to conceive
 words more determinate and full, and which
 more strongly express the doctrine of a *su-*
berintending Providence even over matters
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* Matt. 6, 26—30.

† Matt. 10. 16—31.

the most minute and apparently insignificant?

Further, the divine psalmist thus instructs us; "I said unto the fools, Deal not so foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up your horn. Lift not up your horn so high, speak not with a stiff neck: for *Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but GOD IS THE JUDGE: He putteth down one, and setteth up another.*" † A very remarkable illustration of this we have in the case of king *Nebuchadnezzar*; when for the swelling pride and arrogance of his heart, his kingdom was taken from him, he was driven from men, to eat grass with the oxen of the field, until he should be brought to know and acknowledge, that "the MOST HIGH ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." On which occasion we are further told, that "He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?" *

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† Psalm 75. 4—7.

* See Dan. c. 4. the whole of which, with the devout Pæan of *Hannah*, recorded 1 Sam. 2. 1—10. is well worthy deep consideration on this part of the argument.

That the Divine *Presence* and *Essence* fill all space, and pervade universal nature, we are clearly taught in the following sublime passages, which I cannot but indulge myself in citing at large; “Whither shall I go from thy *Spirit*, or whither shall I flee from thy *Presence*? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day.”* And, “Am I a GOD at hand, saith the LORD, and not a GOD afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the LORD? Do not I FILL HEAVEN AND EARTH, saith JEHOVAH?”†

In short, passages on this subject occur so frequently, that it would be endless to transcribe them all, or to make particular observations on those already enumerated. I will only just add, that the agency of GOD, with regard to the *Influences of the Heavens* and

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* Psalm 139. 7-12.

† Jer. 23. 23, 24.

the Productions of the Earth (the points now more immediately before us,) is particularly celebrated in numerous parts of scripture, and no where with more dignified simplicity than in our text and its contexts; "Thou
 "visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou
 "greatly enrichest it with the river of God,
 "which is full of water: thou preparest them
 "corn, when thou hast so provided for it.
 "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness,
 "and thy paths drop fatness. They
 "drop upon the pastures of the wilderness:
 "And the little hills rejoice on every side.
 "The pastures are clothed with flocks; the
 "vallies also are covered over with corn:
 "they shout for joy, they also sing."

Thus largely and beautifully are we instructed on this very interesting point out of the sacred records of heaven. And, that it is consonant to the highest *Reason*, that it should be so; yea that it is *necessary in the very Nature of things*, must be evident to every thinking person of an unprejudiced mind. Can any thing be so highly reasonable, as that the *Creator* of the Universe, should be its *Preserver* and *Governor*? Yea,

• See Psalm 104. 13—32.—147. 4—18.—148. 3—13.—Matt. 5. 45.
 with many others.

is it possible to suppose, that the GREAT FIRST CAUSE, on whom all Creatures every moment *necessarily* depend for *Existence* and *Operation*,* can pervade universal nature, as we know He does, and not to *actuate*, *direct*, and *over-rule* it? † Or, what Power can we conceive of, besides Himself, equal in any degree to the mighty undertaking? Can we imagine, that mere Mechanical Motion, being once impressed upon matter, is sufficient to preserve it ever after in a regular, uniform course of revolutions, directed to the wisest and best ends, *independent* of the continued interposition and agency of the Deity? We know it is contrary to the nature of things; and that the frame of this Universe, from the very law of the Materials, of which it is constituted, would instantly tumble into confusion

* "All the creatures of GOD, whether they be corporeal or incorporeal, sensible or spiritual, owe their efficacy for producing *any effect* to the Agency of a divine power in and upon them, at the *very time* when such effect is produced.

"Whatever does not necessarily exist in the *first* moment of its existence, cannot necessarily exist in the *second*, or in any following moment; but must owe its *continued* existence to the will of the Being, by whom it was at first produced: For by supposing its existence to continue when that will ceased, we should suppose it to be without the *cause* of its being; ‡ i. e. to exist and act *separate* from, and *independent* of, it, or it might be, contrary to it: a principle, absurd in itself, which, if once admitted, who can say where it would end? Dr. Doddridge's Lectures, Prop. 30.

† See Psa. 94. 7-10.

sion and ruin, were the *almighty Maker's Arm* to be withdrawn from it, or *His influence* suspended, but for a single moment! * Or, can

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* Although, I apprehend, the above will appear, well nigh, a self-evident proposition to every person of common intelligence; it gives me pleasure to be able to confirm it by the testimony of the following very respectable Authorities.

“The Philosopher, who overlooks these (i. e. the traces of an All-governing Deity,) contenting himself with the appearances of the *material* universe only, and the *Mechanical* laws of motion; neglects what is most excellent, and prefers what is imperfect to what is supremely perfect, finitude to infinity, what is narrow and weak to what is unlimited and almighty, and what is perishing to what endures for ever.”

“As the Deity is the first and supreme cause of all things, so it is most unaccountable to exclude him out of nature, and represent him as an *intelligentia extramundana*. On the contrary, it is most natural to suppose him to be the *chief mover throughout the whole universe*, and that all other causes are dependent upon Him: And conformable to this, is the result of all our enquiries into nature; where we are always meeting with powers, that surpass mere *mechanism*, or the effects of matter and motion: The laws of nature are constant and regular; and, for ought we know, all of them may be resolved into one general and extensive power. But this power itself derives its properties and efficacy, not from Mechanism, but, in a great measure, from the *immediate influence* of the *first mover*.”

Maclaurin's Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries, book 4, chap. 9. See also Ferguson on the Physical causes of the Planets' motion, P. 161.

“Marks of Divine Interposition,” says Dr. Doddridge, “in the support and government of the world, appear in the continuance of the *centripetal* and *projectile* force of the Planets, as a mutual balance to each other; neither of which appears necessary in itself, though a failure in either would be attended with a general ruin: and this thought appears with a force greatly increased, when we consider the various composition of that four-fold motion, by which a secondary Planet revolves about its primary, while both revolve about the sun.”

Doddridge's Lectures, Prop. 27. Demon. 4.

“The wisest and greatest Philosophers have not been able to trace any

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we conceive, that the infinitely perfect and benevolent Being, the *Parent* of the universe, as soon as he had completed this system, retired from the works of his own hands, and left them to be governed by, what is called, the *law of their nature*? The very supposition is contradictory and absurd, if not blasphemous: And they, who can swallow such an Hypothesis,

connection between solidity and gravitation, or motion and thought: therefore a *perpetual omnipotent agency* seems to be the most probable way of accounting for those otherwise unaccountable phenomena."

Ibid. Prop. 32. Demon. 1.

"Was an infinite Wisdom and Power necessary," says the learned Bp. Stillingfleet, "to put things into that order they are in? And is not the same necessary for the *government* of them? I cannot see any Reason to think, that the Power of Matter, when set in motion, should either bring things into that exquisite order and dependence, which the parts of the World have upon each other: much less, that by the mere force of that first motion, all things should continue in the state they are in. The most exquisite *Mechanism* cannot put an engine beyond the necessity of being looked after: can we think then this dull, unactive matter, merely by the force of its first motion, should be able still to produce the effects, which are seen in the world, and to keep it from tumbling, at least by degrees, into its pristine *Chaos*?"

Origines Sacrae, B. 3. ch. 32

"The Works of GOD depend wholly, both for their form and their substance, upon that power, by which they were originally brought into existence; and were the Creator to withdraw his supporting energy, the whole creation *would sink into nothing*."

Encyclopædia Britannica, Metaphysics, No. 272.

"Nothing," says an ingenious correspondent, "is more clear to those, who consider the nicety, with which the gravitating and projectile forces are balanced, than that the most ruinous and fatal effects must immediately follow from the destruction or interruption of the equipoise; in other words, from the suspension of the agency of Him,

"Who form'd, directs, and animates the whole."

Hypothesis, deserve neither the name of Philosophers, or Believers.

Further, this argument stands impreguably supported by numerous incontrovertible matters of Fact. For, if God does not *interpose*, upon fit occasions, best chosen by his unerring wisdom,* so as to suspend, alter, or reverse, the regular course of Nature; how are we to account for such events, as the universal Deluge—the destruction of Sodom—the dividing of the Sea, while the waters stood erect, like walls, on the right hand and on the left—and the standing still of the sun in the firmament of Heaven for the space of a day? How, otherwise, came it to pass, that, at the prayer of a Prophet, for the punishment of a wicked Monarch and a sinful People, the Heavens withheld their influence, and there was no Rain for Three years and Six months; and at his intercession again, the Rains descended in abundance, and the earth brought forth her fruit? † How else should rapacious Ravens bring Food to the Prophet?—the raging Fire forget to burn?—and voracious Lions to devour? All miraculous interpositions, whether of mercy or judgment, we are bound

* “—dignus vindice nodus.”

† Jam. 5. 17, 18. i. Kings 17, 1.—18. 42, 45.

bound to ascribe to the hand of the Supreme Ruler: and if we knew but one such instance, well authenticated, it would sufficiently attest, that God takes cognizance of human affairs, and presides over the events, which happen to us: for where shall we draw the line, and say, God is not in *this*?*

In fine, the granting a Revelation from Heaven at all, the marvellous preservation of it in the world, and especially the amazing propagation of the Gospel, amidst the manifold infernal Arts of persecution and Torture employed against it in almost every age; are, of themselves, *standing* and *sufficient* proofs, in every period, that there is an all-wise, superintending Power, who regards the affairs and interests of his creatures.

Now

* "Though in ordinary cases," says a late writer, "the laws which govern these matters (viz. the elements and other creatures) are fixed and permanent, it being perfectly unreasonable to imagine, that God should work miracles to deliver us from the consequences of our own folly and wickedness; yet when the vindication of his Divine Perfections, and the real interests of Virtue and Religion, require it, the Almighty with ease transposes, or suspends them. Thus the Ravens, birds of prey, bring provisions to the disconsolate Prophet. And owing to the same cause, the roaring Lions, who naturally knew no difference between *Daniel* and his Persecutors; yet made a remarkable distinction, and are kept from hurting the One, while with the utmost rapidity they devoured the Other; nor could the fire itself, incapable of design, injure the three *Hebrew* Youths, whose only fault, even in the Monarch's eye, was a steady attachment to the Religion of their country, and the commandments of their God."

Turner's Dissertations on Natural and Revealed Religion, P. 89.

Now, that it is of the utmost importance, not only to give some credit to, but *feelingly to acknowledge and constantly advert to the governing power and providence of GOD*, appears from hence; that, without it, we shall feel little or no concern with, or interest in, Him, and shall lose the *moral* benefits intended by his various dispensations; as He does, from us, the returns of gratitude and praise, fear and love, adoration and reverence, naturally arising from a consciousness of his *Superintendence* in the various events, which happen to us. Where the Providence of GOD is *denied* (and for all *practical* uses, it is much the same, where it is not duly *attended to*), the principal influence, which the belief of his *Existence* naturally produces upon the minds of men, is lost. For what should move us to *love* a GOD, who bestows no *good*; or to *fear* a GOD, who inflicts no *evil*; or to *obey* a GOD, who pays no regard to our *actions*? Why should we *pray* to a Being, who does not *hear* us; or *hope* in a Being, who is not concerned to *help* us? Why should we *thank* Him, if we *receive* nothing from Him; or *adore* and *praise* Him, if He be no ways *beneficial* to the world? If GOD intermeddle

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not with those *Goods* and *Evils*, which happen here below, what *Interest* can we feel in, or *concern* with, Him? Or, what advantage do we derive from the belief of his *existence*? So that, you see, the *denial* or *neglect* of God's Providence, directly cuts in funder all the ties of Religion, by rendering Him an *inactive* and *insignificant* Being to the world; that is, in fact, *no* GOD at all: and that, consequently, an *acknowledgment* of, and *practical attention* to, his Providence, is of the highest importance.*

It is true, in pursuing our inquiries into the administration of the Divine Government, we shall, in various instances, meet with Mysteries, difficult to be unravelled. The keenest penetration of the most discerning, can never discover many of the Springs and Wheels, which keep the grand Machine in motion, and are necessary to account for its various and complicated movements—"such knowledge is too wonderful for us: it is high, we cannot attain unto it." Here we know but in part; we see but as through a "glass darkly:" and must wait for the strong, effulgent light of Eternity, fully to clear up the wise, mysterious plan, the great stupendous whole.

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* See Dr. Scott's *Christian Life*, Part 2, ch. 4. where this argument is handled at large.

There are, however, some *general positions* in the Œconomy of Providence, fairly deducible from the primary truths of Revelation, which, if attended to, will greatly aid our researches in this matter; solve many difficulties; discover the designs of Heaven; and encourage our patient confidence and hope. The following appear to me the most material; which I can merely set down at present, without making any observations upon them: viz. That Sin is the source of all our evils and calamities, as the *general* cause; and, many times, *especially* so—That God is the parent of all Good; and that it is *his* gracious Prerogative to remove the Evil, or to over-rule it, and bring Good out of it—That all Elements and Creatures are in *his* hands, at *his* disposal, and under *his* controul and direction; that he can, whenever he pleases, use them *more immediately* to punish or bless his creatures, to manifest his approbation or displeasure; and that he, not unfrequently, *does* so use them—and That the ultimate design of all his dispensations towards us, is our Happiness, consistently with the honour of his own Perfections and Government—to bring us into unreserved subjection to Himself, that we may become *truly* holy and happy. These

These are, I apprehend, the leading views on this subject; and, with these principles deeply rooted in our minds, and ever present before us, it behoves us to *scan the ways of Providence*, and religiously contemplate all his dealings towards us. Beheld thus, what a different appearance would the various scenes around us, many times, present to our view! Where now we see nothing but Chance and Confusion; we should then behold exquisite Harmony and Design! Where now we see nothing but Evil and Calamity; we should then behold the *Providence of God*, so directing and over-ruling the Evil, as to effect by it the *most beneficial purposes*! Where now we perceive only the Machinations of men, the Course of nature, and secondary Causes; we should then discover the Hand of God, *punishing* transgression, or turning the *fierceness of man* to his praise, and causing “all things to work together for good to “them, that love Him!” O! how desirable, how blessed, thus to *see God* in all things, and to “acknowledge Him in all our ways!”*

D 2

Agreeably

*What Dr. Watts, with equal truth and beauty, says, concerning the creative power in Deity alone, may, I apprehend, be applied, with no less propriety (using only the necessary variation of expressions) to His *sole supporting, and governing Agency*.

Lc9

Agreeably to the Positions laid down in the foregoing observations, I

Secondly remark, That it is especially necessary, under any *frowning aspect of Providence*, to enquire diligently after *the cause* of it; to call our own ways to remembrance, and search out our sins; to humble ourselves before GOD, and implore the removal of his Displeasure; and that He would be graciously pleased to bring good to us out of the chastisement,

This remark is manifestly built upon the supposition, that *Sin* is generally the cause of our Sufferings; and that *signal Calamities* are mostly *signal Tokens* of the Divine displeasure. This, I apprehend, is particularly true in Public calamities, where a *nation* in general is concerned; as, it is plain, there is no other way of punishing *national Crimes*, but by *national Judgments* in this life.

Many instances of the truth of this, relative both

“Let the Atheist then,” says he, exert his utmost stretch of understanding, let him try the force of all his *mechanical Powers*, to compose the wing of a Butterfly, or the meanest feather of a Sparrow; let him labour and sweat, and faint, and acknowledge his own weakness: then let him turn his eye, and look at those wondrous composures, his Son or his little Daughter; and when their infant tongues shall enquire of him, and say *Father who made us?* let him not dare assume the honour of that work to Himself, but teach the young creatures, that *there is a GOD*, and fall down on his face, and repent, and worship.” Philosophical Essays, Ess. 9. Sect. 1.

both to nations, families, and individuals, might be recited from the Holy Scriptures, as well as from other authentic histories; was there time now to make the selection, or would the limits of this discourse permit. The general principle, however, is contained in, and sufficiently confirmed by, the following divinely inspired testimony; "Hear this word, that JEHOVAH hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, saying, You only have I known," that is, chosen and honoured with peculiar privileges—"of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.—Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be Evil in a city, and JEHOVAH hath not done, *or inflicted*, it?"* And therefore we are admonished by the same authority, "Hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it."†

It must, however, be admitted, that it is not easy to discover, in all cases, the *precise* cause of our calamities, or to fix the *special* design aimed at by them. At other times, after due deliberation, and serious attention to surrounding circumstances, we undoubtedly may. How frequently is the Sin strongly

* Amos 3. 1—8.

† Mic. 6. 9.

ly delineated in the *punishment*, and brought into remembrance by it, even after many days? When the brethren of Joseph received *rough* treatment from him in Egypt (though in disguise), and he seemed inexorable to their intreaties; *then*, and not till then, "They, "said one to another, We are verily guilty "concerning our brother, in that we saw the "anguish of his soul, when he besought us; "and we would not hear: therefore is this "distress come upon us."* And, at all times, those visitations furnish a proper occasion, to call our ways seriously to remembrance, to humble ourselves for our transgressions, and "turn unto Him that smiteth us," and seek his favour. This can never be unseasonable, nor without the happiest effects.

Let us, now, apply these reflections to the *gloomy prospects* presented before us, a short time ago, respecting the *staple provision of life*. What a melancholy scene appeared to our view! An uncommon dearth and scarcity of Bread *actually felt*! The hopes of an approaching Harvest, well nigh, blasted by the long-continued inclemency of the weather, and the ravages of a devouring insect, which infested the Corn! And the People rising, in various

* Gen. 42. 21. See also Gen. 27. 35, with c. 29. 25.—37. 32.

various places, into tumults and commotions, through the hardships of their situation! Do not Occurrences, like these, call loudly for serious Reflection and Inquiry? Was there not a cause? Were they merely the effects of Chance, or secondary causes, in the ordinary course of things? Or, was there not the *avenging* Hand of God in them, for some national Crimes or Impieties? Surely, such a supposition is not, at least, altogether rash and unprecedented. Hear what the inspired penman says on a similar occasion; "He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and watter springs into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, *for the Wickedness of them, that dwell therein.*"* We are here naturally reminded of the express stipulations JEHOVAH made on this subject with his people of old, Deut. 11. 13—17. And when we behold, at any time, similar events, may we not properly suspect, and search for a similar cause;† especially, if it be true, that these things

* Psa. 107. 33, 34:

† A living writer, already quoted, gives the following judicious and comprehensive view of this subject.

"To obedient Israel, says he, God promises the former and the latter rain. On the other hand, when iniquity abounds, he often judges it proper to punish the transgressors by pestilential Air, or barren Seasons; hinder their designs by Winds and Weather; fetter bounds to their exorbi-

tant

things “ are written for our admonition ?” * Perhaps, like *Jeshurun*, through the abundance of our prosperity and blessings, as a Nation, we “ have waxen fat and kicked— “ we have forsaken God, who made us, and “ lightly esteemed the Rock of our Salvation :” † and therefore He threatened to take away from us, as he did from Jerusalem and Judah, “ the stay and the staff, the whole “ stay of bread, and the whole stay of water.” § Do not Corruptions increase, and impieties prevail, especially among the higher orders of the community ? And may we not justly suspect, that God is about to *visit* us for these things, as well as for the non-improvement of the superior advantages we enjoy ? ‡ At least,

tant passions : curbs their licentious desires : overthrows the most powerful Fleets and Armies ; defeats the wisest Counsels ; and arbitrates the differences of Princes, with the fates of Men and Kingdoms— by his Superintendency of *Natural Effects* alone. The import of all which is, that every event of this kind, whether great or small, is under the immediate Providence of God.” Turner’s *Difertations*, P. 39.

* See 1. Cor. 10. 11. 2. Tim. 3. 16. † Deut. 32. 15, &c. § Isa. 3. 1.

‡ Does not the progress of *Jocinian* and *infidel* principles in this nation, the insolent Neglect of the worship of Almighty God, and every species of Irreligion and Profaneness, as well as of Luxury and Dissipation, which prevail among us; sufficiently attest the Justness of this remark, and give room for the above awful suggestion ? When do we behold any of those, who fill exalted stations, (with very few exceptions), and who should be examples to their inferiors, attending upon the Worship of their Maker ; or, at least, with any tolerable appearance of serious devotion ? Can their Closets witness their devout perusal of the sacred Pages, that

they

the Reflection surely deserves our most serious investigation.

It is also very remarkable, and worthy to be recorded, that, after the prospect of returning Plenty; through a total and memorable change in the whole scene of things, a *much greater scarcity of Bread* was felt, in several places, than at any time before, through a deficiency of Wind and Water to grind the Corn with. This shows us, with what ease, and in what various ways, the Almighty can, whenever he pleases, *punish* offending Mortals; and disappoint their hopes, even in the supposed moment of Fruition.—But, blessed, for ever blessed be God! who “keep-
eth not his anger for ever!” He did not prolong the chastisement. A very gracious change speedily took place, and a gladdening prospect brightened around us.* Which leads me to a

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Third

they may learn his Will; or their fervent addresses to his throne, that they may obtain his Grace, and be accepted of Him, through the Saviour of Sinners? Rather, does not their general Conduct speak this language; What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him? And shall not God visit for these things? Will He always keep silence, and be as one, that regardeth not?—If this sermon should, by any means, wander into the hands of such, may they be induced to lay this friendly warning seriously to heart, *before Iniquity be their ruin!*

* These reflections are equally applicable to the occurrences of domestic and private life. In the unkindness of Friends, the loss of a beloved Partner, Child, Property, Health; in disappointments &c. the views and principles above recommended, should influence our heart and conduct,

Third Remark, That it is highly becoming and incumbent upon us, that we notice the *favourable appearances* of Providence in our behalf with *great Gratitude and Thankfulness*; especially after enduring the tokens of his Displeasure; and when they appear to be in answer to Prayer: *O Thou, that hearest Prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come, v. 2.*

This remark must approve itself to the reason and conscience of every unbiassed mind. And can any thing be more reasonable and proper, relative to the happy events, which we have just now witnessed? Who can contemplate our late, in many respects, *abundant Harvest*, and the *uncommon fine Season* for gathering it in; and not be constrained to acknowledge and adore the *merciful interposition* of Providence in our favour; especially after the gloomy prospects, which immediately preceded it? Can we review the burthened fields waving their golden plenty; and the Bosom of the Reaper filled with the luxuriant sheaves? Can we behold the yards of the Husbandman crowded with their precious stores? Can we reflect on a whole Harvest, in most places, gathered in without the interruption of even a single Shower! And, since then, the fine Rains, which have fallen, preparing the earth for another Seeding!

Can

Can we, I say, review these scenes with any attention, and not feel our hearts warmed with Gratitude to the *Lord of the Harvest*? Does not *this* Season stand distinguished among the seasons, as crowned with peculiar goodness—the *Year of thy Goodness*? And do not then such Public and general blessings, demand as Public Gratitude and Praise? Let us own the Hand of God in ripening suns, and in refreshing showers; and when Nature is gay and fruitful, let our Praises daily rise to our bountiful Benefactor. Let people recollect their former painful apprehensions, and, contrasting them with the present pleasing reverse, say, how justly our best Praise is due to the sovereign Disposer of events! How sweet is the calm sunshine, after the boisterous storm! How exhilarating the return of Plenty, after the dread feeling and foreboding of Want! The mercy, thus, is doubled! We taste its value more! We feel its magnitude! And—if our sensibilities be properly alive, we *tremble* at our own demerits, in the *near* prospect of the impending vengeance! Let us not therefore, for a short season only, while the Blessing is fresh before us, but continually be calling upon our grateful powers, in the pious strains of the Psalmist, “Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all, that is within
“ me

“me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O
 “my soul; and forget not all his benefits. Who
 “forgiveth all thine Iniquities—who crowneth
 “thee with loving-kindness and tender
 “mercies.”*

But, on the other hand, are we hastily to conclude, that the designs of GOD, in afflictive providences, are accomplished, and the proper effects produced in us; because they may appear, for the present, to be removed? By no means: at least not always; perhaps not in the present case. It may be, the Wrath is only suspended; not entirely withdrawn. His Arm may yet be uplifted to strike the fatal blow—the messenger of Vengeance be ready to go forth; but is restrained for a season. Our *Noahs*, *Daniels*, and *Jobs*, have prevailed for a little longer respite. JESUS, our great Intercessor, has pleaded for us, as he did once for that *barren Fig-tree*, the Jewish Nation; “Let it alone,” spare it, “this Year also, “till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well:”—but it is added, “and if “not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down.”† See also that awful passage in Ezek. 14. 12—20. where we are forewarned, by the example of Israel, that a time may come (GOD grant, it may be far, very far off from this nation),

* Psa. 103. 1—4.

† Luke 13. 8, 9.

nation), when JEHOVAH will no more be intreated for a guilty Land, *when it sinneth against Him, by trespassing grievously.*

This suggests another important idea, or Remark on the present subject; viz.

Fourthly, That we do *not presume*, because the tokens of the divine displeasure, are removed, or suspended; but that we *fear before Him*, and enter into serious examination, whether, as a Nation, or as Individuals, the designs of his Visitations have been answered upon us; I mean, whether we have been brought to Repentance and Amendment before Him, and a serious return of heart unto Him.—For, if not, we may justly expect, He *will* let the uplifted thunder drop: we may certainly look for the return of Calamities, attended with still more aggravated circumstances, until the End be accomplished, or we be destroyed and rooted out. The Cloud, that has long been gathering, will burst at last with accumulated Vengeance.

Thus, in the case of Israel of old, when the LORD brought one grievous Calamity after another upon them, for their iniquities, the burthen of the Charge, continually repeated against them, is, *Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith JEHOVAH.* It is added, “therefore
“thus

“thus will I do unto thee, O Israel”: that is, thus will I go on to do unto thee, sending one Judgment after another—“and because “I will do this unto thee, *prepare to meet thy* “GOD, O Israel;” that is, summon all thy forces, and set the Battle in array, if thou be able to contend it out with Him.* But ah! “who is able to stand before this holy “LORD GOD?”†

Perhaps, I say, this is the case, in the instance now before us. We are told, that, notwithstanding the profusion of other Grain, the *Wheat*, in most places, *yields* but lightly in the thrashing; especially in proportion to the apparent quantity on the ground: and that, without timely precautions, a greater Dearth and Scarcity will be experienced next season, than was this last.‡

To

* Amos 4. 6—12.

† 1 Sam. 6. 20.

‡ The above statement has since been found to be alas! but too true, from the accounts laid before the Committee, appointed, very properly, by Government to inquire into the state of the Bread-Corn in the Nation.

Notwithstanding this, it is firmly believed by many, and I fear on too just grounds, that the present high price of Corn, is owing, as well to the nefarious practices of Factors, Foretellers, and Monopolizers, as to a real deficiency in the Crops. If such characters have no regard for the existing laws of their Country, while they can, by any means, evade them; if they have steeled their hearts against the generous feelings of Humanity; let them, at least, hearken to the Voice of GOD in his Word, with whom no crime can possibly pass undetected, or, if persisted in, unpunished: “He, that withholdeth Corn”—in dear times, in hopes of higher Markets, and will not be satisfied without immoderate profits—“the People shall

To whatever extent this may prove true, let us, at least, improve this thought, along with other existing circumstances, for the purposes of Humiliation and Self-inquiry. All must confess, that we have deserved Chastisement. And shall we not take warning, while the *Rod* is yet shaking over us? "When the Judgments of God, are in the earth, shall not the inhabitants thereof learn Righteousness?" And shall not *we* be instructed; by his Dealings with his antient People, and with other Nations, as well as with ourselves? There, certainly, appears something more than ordinary, something portentous, in the present scene of things around us. The state of the Nations of Europe at large, demands our most serious attention. No doubt, great and important events may be expected to take place! Events, which are the subject of Scripture-Prophecy, and for this, among other reasons, that all, who fear God, may be

"shall curse him: but Blessings," doubtless from God, as well as his neighbour—"shall be upon the head of him, that selleth it."* How exceedingly depraved and callous must his Heart be, who can thus, without remorse, grind the faces of the Poor; and run the hazard of plunging his Neighbours and his Country into tumult and blood, for the sake of a little paltry gain, which will never profit its possessor! Perhaps, he little thinks his Sin is so heinous in the eyes of Heaven, or is thus emphatically marked in his Bible.

* Prov. 11. 26.

be forewarned thereby, and get prepared to meet them. If a Sparrow does not fall to the ground, without the Divine notice, much less can the overthrow of States and Empires happen, without his wise and just appointment.* Yet alas! how little are these things considered, by either Rulers or People! I am persuaded they ought to be more seriously regarded, as speaking with a loud voice to sinful Mortals; and comprehending in them momentous Admonitions from the Sovereign of the universe.† Could my voice, therefore, reach even the ears of Potentates, in his august name, I would announce the solemn exhortation. “Be wise now, O ye Kings: be
 “instructed, ye Judges of the earth: Serve
 “the LORD with fear, and rejoice with
 “trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
 “and ye perish from the way, when his
 “Wrath is kindled but a little.” Also, “let
 “the Priests, the Ministers of the LORD,
 “weep between the porch and the altar, and
 “let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD,
 and

* See Dan. ii. 19—45. c. 7. 2.—27.

† It was very remote from my intention, to give this Sermon, in any degree, a *political* aspect: but, in treating of the Providence of GOD, as concerned in and watching over the affairs of Men, at such a Season as the present; it appeared so intimately connected with my leading object, that I could scarcely avoid dropping a hint or two on the subject.

"and give not thine Heritage to reproach."
 Yea, "let all the inhabitants of the land trem-
 "ble: for the Day of the LORD cometh, for
 "it is nigh at hand."* O! that a spirit of
 Mourning and Supplication might go through
 the land; that each individual, from the King
 upon his throne, unto the meanest of his Sub-
 jects, might mourn apart, for the portion *his*
 Sins bear in the National Guilt, "as one that
 "mourneth for his first-born."† For thus saith
 the LORD of Hosts, "At what instant I shall
 "speak, concerning a Nation, and concerning
 "a People, to pluck up, and to pull down,
 "and to destroy it: if that Nation against
 "whom I have pronounced, *turn from their*
 "*Evil*, I will repent of the Evil, that I thought
 "to do unto them."‡ On the contrary, he has
 solemnly declared, "Though hand join in
 "hand, the Wicked shall not be unpunished."
 For, saith He, "I lift up my hand to heaven,
 "and say, *I live for ever*. If I whet my glit-
 "tering sword, and my hand take hold on
 "Judgment, I will render Vengeance to mine
 "Enemies, and will reward them, that hate
 "me."§ And He, who has the *Powers of Uni-*
versal Nature at his command, whom all Ele-
 ments and Creatures in heaven and earth
 obey;

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obey;

* Psa. 2. 10—12. Joel 2. 1—17.

† Zech. 12. 10—14.

‡ Jer. 18. 7, 8.

§ Prov. 11, 21; Deut. 32. 40, 41.

obey ; can never want Means or Instruments to effect his Purposes.

Upon the whole, we may observe from this Subject, generally :—How reviving and consolatory the reflection of an all-surrounding Providence must be to the *good* Man!—to the pious humble believing Soul, who *practically maketh the LORD his Trust* ! Though conscious of manifold frailties and demerit ; he rejoices in the thought of a celestial Witness to his Integrity, a Divine Guardian of his Interests, and a sovereign Controller of all sublunary Events. Is he *afflicted* ? He knows it is for his *good* : he bows submissive to the Rod, and marks with gratitude the proofs of the parental Care and Kindness of his heavenly Father. Is he reviled, and persecuted, and injuriously slandered for Righteousness' sake ? He can, with patience and cheerfulness, commit himself to Him, that judgeth righteously ; and wait, with confidence, *his* impartial Decision. In short, his Triumph is, “ The LORD IS KING, be the people never so impatient : He sitteth between the “ Cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet.”*

On the contrary, how terrible is the consideration to the Vicious and Profane !—to the Man, whose *Practice* evidences, that, *he careth not for GOD* ! He cannot derive any satisfaction

* Psa. 99. 1. Prayer Book Version.

tisfaction from the reflection of a surrounding, watchful Providence, whenever the thought obtrudes itself upon him. He can only see an Almighty Arm raised to crush him; and an all-prying Eye, noting down his most secret sins for Judgment! Or, if he beholds himself surrounded with numerous blessings, in common with others; still, God is *not in all his thoughts*: he “sacrifices to his own net, and burns incense unto his drag.”* And though, in the pursuits of Business, and amidst the joyous scenes of Conviviality and pleasurable Amusements, he may appear happy; yet, a secret something, a self-reproaching Conscience, a dread foreboding *as to the Issue*, mars the enjoyment of the whole in the silent moments of Reflection or Sickness; while his Heart tells him, he has lived *without Christ, and without God in the world*. In short, he feels no love to God, no pleasure in the contemplation of his Being and Perfections, nor any interest in Him; and, therefore, could *secretly* wish Him struck out of the universe!

Finally, since the God, with whom we have to do, is indeed so glorious and infinite a Being, and so *able to punish*; let us not dare any longer to presume, but let us *fear before Him*. Since He is so good, and plenteous
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in mercy ; let us love and adore Him : and, while his forbearance and compassion last, let us repent, and return unto Him. Roused from our fatal security, and stupor, let us pray earnestly for the softening influences of his Holy Spirit, that the displays of his Goodness may effectually move our hearts, before the terrors of his Justice make us afraid. And, while we rejoice before Him, let us do it *with reverence*.

Above all, let every review of our Crimes, whether *national* or *personal*, remind us of the infinite value of that precious, bleeding Sacrifice, *through which alone* they can be forgiven : and let a sense of their dreadful demerit, press us to seek *speedily* for deliverance. Thus, we shall happily experience, that there is yet *Forgiveness with Him*, that *He may be feared* : our best interests will be secured ; and we be brought into the fittest state to meet all the issues of Providence, however new, however calamitous. Yea, we shall prove the truth of these most consolatory words, in a sense far beyond the limits of our present scanty conceptions ; “ ALL THINGS “ work together for good to them, that love “ GOD ; to them, who are the Called according to his purpose.”*

* Rom. 8. 28.

THE END.



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